

*Washington, D.C.-- Today, Congressman Sires wrote the following [blog post](#) for The Hill's Congress Blog.*

For nearly fifty years, Richard Holbrooke passionately served his country. He represented the United States in some of the most challenging of places, and along the way, left his distinct mark on U.S. foreign policy. His passion and abilities will be greatly missed.

Ambassador Holbrooke's accomplishments are numerous and impressive. His breadth of knowledge was astonishing and his expertise in world affairs had few matches. After beginning his career in the Foreign Service in Vietnam, he worked under President Johnson on Vietnam issues. Under President Carter, he expanded his skills as the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. In the early 1990s, Mr. Holbrooke served as the U.S. Ambassador to Germany, and in 1995, as Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, he was instrumental in reaching the Dayton Peace Agreement that ended the conflict in Bosnia. In his last years, Richard Holbrooke was tackling arguably the most pressing issue facing the United States as the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Drawing on his extensive experience, Richard Holbrooke was an essential element in shaping U.S. strategy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan. He approached this demanding arena with open arms and tireless effort. As the war in Afghanistan remains a primary challenge, the void left by Mr. Holbrooke will continue to be felt. We will certainly miss his diplomatic talent and unique insight, but his legacy will not be forgotten. In his work, Ambassador Holbrooke conveyed the power of focus and hard work and above all the importance of diplomacy. He emphasized military and civil collaboration and always sought a balance between the two. It is these lessons that must not be lost with his passing, for these lessons are critical if we are to make progress in the region.

Ambassador Holbrooke was not only a dedicated servant of the United States; he was also a vocal critic of the country he served. As a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I have had the privilege to hear the always informative and sometimes biting testimony of Ambassador Holbrooke. His frequent participation at Committee hearings not only illustrated his great importance to foreign policy, but it also demonstrated his commitment to improving the interactions among Congress, the Department of State, and the White House. While his critiques at times were harsh, he spoke openly about the system's shortcomings because he knew the process could and must be improved. It is this dynamic for which he will be remembered, and it is this pragmatic style that will be a model for future generations.

While fighting for peace and justice abroad, he simultaneously improved the foreign policy process in Washington. Indeed, we have lost a great leader and thinker, but I am confident that his contributions will shape the course of foreign policy for years to come.

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